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Musings of a Medico

Kenneth Rogers, M.D. (Lond.)

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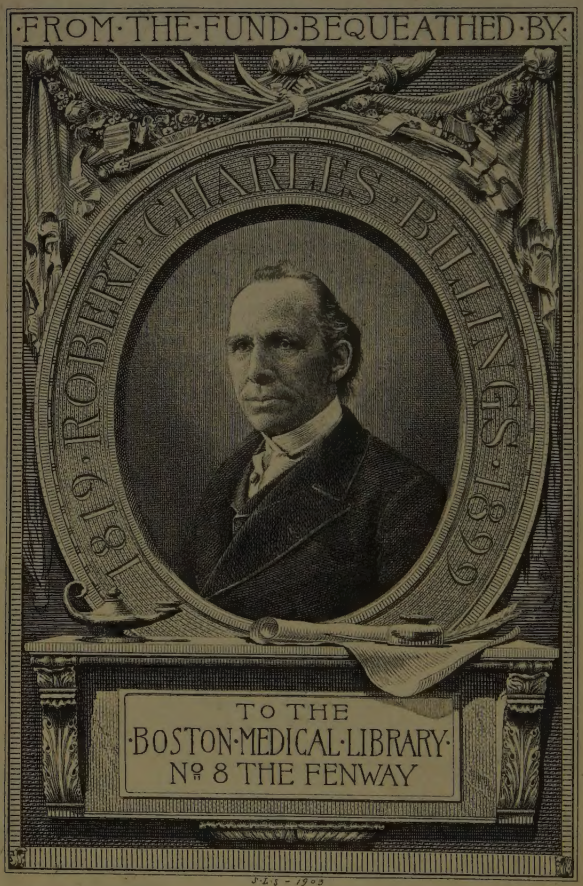
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Nº 8 THE FENWAY

To E. H. R.

THROUGH the sunny pastures green,
Jewelled o'er with flowers gay,
What rejoicings have we seen
As we followed our twin way;

Butterflies and flowers rare
Rainbows round the pathway throw;
With sweet sounds and colours fair
Hearts attuned, in pleasure glow—

In the forest's darkling shade,
O'er the hard and rugged road,
Thy companionship has made
Light the destined human load!—

Through the meadows in the sun
May our path now peaceful be,
As some placid stream doth run
Gliding softly to the sea!

Musings of a Medico

BY
KENNETH ROGERS
M.D. (Lond.)

LONDON, W.C.
ERSKINE MACDONALD, LTD.

17329 Bi. 25

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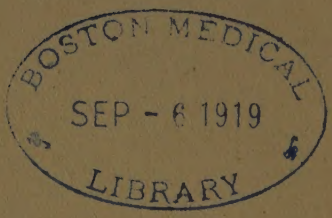
First Published October, 1918



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The Pageant of the Flowers

To a Garden Lover

HAPPY he, who can enjoy
In a garden, days to toy,
Passing pageant of the flowers
Watch, from their accustomed bowers
In their yearly sequence peep,
Springing from their winter sleep!
Christmas Rose, Anemone,
And the coloured Hellebores see;
Snowdrops, Primrose's surprise,
Crocus with its showy dyes;
Daphnes paint their magic stems,
Scilla's floor of turquoise gems;
Almonds, Cherries, deck the sky
With their fairy tracery;
Daffodils with yellow snout
In battalions upsprout;
Hyacinths and Hawthorn sweet
Sight and smell together greet;
London Pride, Forget-me-not,
Tulips' dazzling flashes hot,
Lupins', Larkspurs' cooler hue
Shaking screens of varied blue,
That the bumble bees despoil
Till the night, with frenzied toil!
Lilies of the purest white,
Iris' many-hued delight,

And the Honeysuckle twine
O'er the feathery Columbine ;
Overhead and all around
See the Queenly Rose abound,
Reigning mistress of the scene—
Clouds of pink, midst summer's green ;
Then the Autumn host, alas !
Warning that the pageants pass,
All the nodding yellow race,
Sunflowers with stately face,
With the Aster's cooler note ;
Admirals and Peacocks float,
Drones, unwitting of their fate,
On the Sedums congregate !
Till December's dreary days,
Bringing sun of sickly rays,
Warn us that the play is o'er ;
Stay ! there springs the Hellebore !

Flashes of the Past

WHEN music with thrilling vibrations,
A sound or a chance-spoken word,
Or sight, arouse haunting sensations
And strike a mysterious chord ;

Recall for the flash of a second
A long-agone day or a scene ;
From Past to the Present have beckoned
The phantoms of years that have been.

In mirror of memory, magic,
The images vivid may seem ;
We see them, or joyous or tragic,
The shades of a long-vanished dream !

Perchance a ray lights for a twinkling
The shadows ancestral and vast,
Gives offspring of ages an inkling
Of life, from the sleep of the past !

To Androsace Glacialis and its High Mountain Plant Peers

HIGH on the world's Cathedral roof
You kiss the sun and greet the snow,
From life's wild surging tides aloof,
Heed not their ceaseless ebb and flow.

Far down below the struggles rage,
Leaf-shedding woods and herbage tall;
Then sombre pines take up the gage,
Till their last stunted outposts fall.

Drear deserts now of broken rocks,
Where Earth's bared skeleton appears,
Shattered by Frost's fierce hammer shocks,
Riven by mallets of the years!

While Chaos reigns in this wild scene,
You stud the waste with cushions rare,
With Gentians, gems of wondrous sheen,
Studs pink and blue, celestial fair!

As summer's seasons fleeting go,
When love and sunshine round you gleam,
Embraced by soft sleep-giving snow,
'Neath its chaste coverlet you dream!

Thunderstorm on Lake of Lucerne, 1900

BRIGHT shines the sun on azure lake
Whose waters gurgle 'neath our boat;
The dripping oars its mirrors break;
Sweet sounds to lull us as we float.

Pilatus dark forgets to frown,
In mantle blue o'erlooks the scene;
While yonder, Lucerne's shimmering town
Vibrates beneath its Alplets green.

When suddenly the thunders growl;
Dark clouds on sombre mountains form,
The winds around us wildly howl,
And waters dark reflect the storm!

Oft so the roses of our life
When they most fair and radiant seem,
Severed by Fate's unseeing knife,
Elude us, like a vanished dream!

The Spirit of the Mountains

A Swiss Climb in 1891

UP gloomy aisles of pine trees black
We climb by lantern's fitful light :
O'er Alps and glacier's doubtful track,
Our steps slow measure out the night.

The snow's crust crackles 'neath our feet,
Hard toiling up the ghostly space,
When suddenly we joyous greet,
A pink blush on the high snow's face ;

As on this flush our eyes we feast,
Too soon a pale green light succeeds,
And then from out the dawning East
The day's full golden glory speeds.

In this vast solitude of snow,
What puny ants do we appear ;
Where Earth dissolves in Heaven's glow
Eternity itself draws near !

The giant mountains ring us round,
Eternal judges, calm, serene ;
Our trivial presence here is found
Profanity in such a scene !

Lines suggested by a Piece of Coal

BACK through the maze of Time where all is night,
Through age and space so vast that fancy quails,
Whose shattered ruins shroud you with their veils,
There in the dawn of Life you graced the light—

Fair waved the forest, virginal and green,
As giant ferns uprose the ancient trees,
Whose feathered fronds fanned gently in the breeze,
Upon that primal day that you have seen!

No sound but rustling of the leaves, wind-stirred,
For silence reigned, save when strange lizard life
The waters troubled with its splashing strife;
Within the forest moved nor beast nor bird—

While, decked with glistening sheen, you stored the sun,
In what strange cell was lodged Our vital spark?
Unsolved as madman's dream the riddle dark;
Our timid minds th' amazing answer shun!

And so beneath the load of Time you sank,
And o'er your head the races came and went,
As type on type long flourished and was spent,
With cloak of ages hid in darkness blank!

Each several sort lived its allotted span,
'Neath fatal law that nothing long abides—

Each grain of dust a thousand struggles hides !
Then last appeared the Arch-destroyer, Man !

With tyrant's hand he lays the forests low ;
In pride insane he claims a sov'reign sway ;
Against all Nature wages ceaseless fray,
And vainly wars with Death, eternal foe !

He desecrates the temples of the dead,
And tears you from your tomb, for selfish end—
Will He too pass and into night descend,
And other forms here flourish in his stead ?

Unchanged the star lights sparkle in the sky,
The sun's resplendent triumph through the vast :
Your distant Age is but an hour past,
Poor kindred, fleeting atoms, you and I !

Vice

THY dragon's eyes are twin,
With fiery scintillations
From furnace fierce of sin,
Melt human hesitations;

Allure thy charmèd slaves
Across the land or ocean,
Unheeding rocks or waves
In their entranced commotion;

As moths around a flame
They burn their wings and flutter,
And, blind to death or shame,
They plunge to darkness utter!

Thine ancient lures decoy
The passing generations,
With gleaming flames destroy
And scorch the sap of Nations!

To an Old Tankard

OLD Tankard ! could you but recall,
Your sides reflect, the vanished Past,
When in old Hostelry or Hall
You fired the hours that flew too fast—

And show each lover's dress and face,
Whose burning lips on yours were press't,
Their wigs and ways of former grace,
Recall their varied speech and jest !

And paint the form of each fair maid,
Of whose warm hands you hide the touch ;
The lightnings of her eyes that played,
Her melting smiles that lured so much !

We strive to see, and strive in vain,
The phantoms that you knew so well,—
For ever gone, while you remain !
Your opened lips refuse to tell !

Verses on an Elizabethan Gold Angel

The beautiful gold coin first struck in Edward IV's reign

WHOSE fingers have gently caressed you,
Oh! Angel with soft yellow face?
What gallants in purses have pressed you
When London around you did race?

Did Sidney or Raleigh once hold you,
Or Bacon, in soft leather purse?
What secrets have courtiers told you;
What memories rare do you nurse?

Did Howard you hold in his pockets,
Or Frobisher, Hawkins or Drake?
Did they buy with you liquors or lockets;
At cards pass you on as a stake?

Did you know "The Three Cranes" and "The Tabard,"
"The Mermaid," or "Boar's Head" in Chepe?
Did you hear the sword leap from its scabbard,
When your hosts had been revelling deep?

Did you pay there for sack or Canary,
For Rhenish or draughts of great ale?
Did Ben or Kit Marlowe unwary,
Their drink, on the strength of you, hail?

And while they all shuffled and wore you,
With sovereigns and crowns in their coats,
What change did your Owners get for you,
What medley of shillings and groats?

The groats and testoons of old Harry,
With fat-jowled, familiar face,
Young Edward and Philip and Mary,
Who at one another grimace!

Amongst them, maybe, there were many,
With masterful face of your Bess,
On shilling or sixpence or penny,
Her hair hanging down her rich dress.

Such timbered and quaint-gabled houses,
In true London town within walls,
You saw, and with Cits or their spouses,
You've paced down the aisle of Old Paul's!

Physicians "prognosticks" have given
At sound of your soft golden voice;
With Potions and Juleps have striven,
'Twixt bleeding and Clysters made choice!

And Shakespeare—I tremble to ask it,
Do you hide the faint touch of *his* hand?
If so, the world holds not a casket
That's worthy a treasure so grand!

To a Fair Lady's Eyes

THE beauty of each flower fair,
The view of sea or lake,
Of woods and fields and moorland bare,
With joy our hearts awake :

The mountains dark or snowy clad,
The tarn and pebbled stream,
The birds' bright plumage, make us glad
And weave life's painted dream !

Why do *your eyes* these beauties kill,
And make them drab and dull ?
What subtle rays do they distil,
That other charms annul ?

Her Reply

THE flowers' countless beauties pure,
The sight of lake or sea,
The painted woods and fields allure
And make me joy to be !

Since all these charms rejoice my eyes,
That drink Life's sparkling spring,
Within *your mind* the mischief lies
Whence sense has taken wing !

To Health

I'LL keep thee as a welcome guest,
And entertain thee, Health!
Without thee, life's a gruesome jest,
A mockery is wealth.

Then gratefully may I retain
Thy hidden source of joy;
Once lost, our lands and fame are vain,
Our feasts and pleasures cloy.

I'll hold thee ever by the hand,
And watch thee closely, Health;
Lest, from our trail along the sand,
Thou slipp'st away by stealth!

May I thus Health not firmly seize,
And ever with it live?
It is but absence of disease,
A shadow negative!

Impression of a Typhoon between Japan and Shanghai

On S.S. Glenfarg, 1896

WE leave Japan in rising gale,
The chasing billows higher grow,
Around our lonely shelter frail
The shrieking Typhoon's tempests blow—

The night sets in with darkening gloom,
The sea and sky one blackness form ;
Our ship, oppress't with heavy doom,
Now staggers 'neath the fearful storm ;

With leaden feet the hours crawl,
As in this whirlpool vast we swirl ;
The crested monsters, mountain tall,
Above the panting funnels curl.

On such a wild, chaotic night
All worldly links from round us fall ;
How infinite is Nature's might,
And Man, how infinitely small !

The day comes with a lurid light,
As deluge curtains round us close,
The howling wind, with demon spite,
Great floods, as feathers, o'er us throws !

Another night, thus helpless tossed,
Our shivering shaft, wild-racing, strains;
Our oil on distant waters lost;
But sailor's lion heart remains!

Then at the second morning's break
The timid sun looks wanly through
And rounded forms the billows take,
With distant Yang-Tse's yellow hue:

And in the heaving desert vast
The Pilot's sail we joyous spy;
The Typhoon's fury overpast,
As fearful nightmare of the sky!

An Impression of a Sandstorm in the Suez Canal

(1896)

AS I have seen, down London Street,
The fog's black curtain slowly creep,
Our eyes of welcome sunlight cheat ;
And all things hide in darkness deep.

So, in the Bitter Lakes, the wall
Of yellow sandstorm on us swept ;
Its harbinger, the shrieking squall,
Green waves up-lashed, that at us leapt.

Its curtain covers ships and land,
Then blinds us with a thousand stings ;
The dusky deluge of the sand
Its night across the portholes flings !

But soon, its fury fierce was spent,
As we, at anchor, patient lay ;
Then Southward, down Canal, we went,
In splendour of Egyptian day !

An Inside View of a War Hospital

DOWN the bright corridors pass, where hearts must vibrate with emotion,
Into the hospital ward, filled by fortuitous fate :
Filled with the wrecks of the war, cast back from its devilish ocean,
Flotsam and jetsam we see, crushed in its ocean of hate !

War-worn and weary and sad, their eyes hold a terrible vision :
Could we but hear with their ears, sound of inaudible guns !
Unwilling they to go back, the sceptics may sneer in derision—
(Tongues full of thunders of Thor, far from the fear of the Huns !)

Happy they went to the war, illusioned and dazed with its glories :
Drugged with the magic of eyes ; synchronous music and feet !
Now they look wistfully back, awaken its slumbering stories,
Visions of comrades at rest, sadly in memory meet !

Phantoms or puppets they seem, shown up for a flash in the lightning—
Was it for end such as this, oh! mothers enduring of pain?—
Star of humanity dimmed shall burn with its beams ever brightening,
From this self-sacrifice vast, radiance eternal retain!

Out of the murderous mire, to the crests of the future advancing,
May the democracies rise, knit by this funeral knell!
Shatter the mirage of war, for ages their senses entrancing;
Trample its demons accurst, back to their nethermost hell!

Nov., 1916.

On the Death of a Young Soldier "Broken" in France

Suggested by the rhythm of "Chopin's March"

HARK ! solemn sounds our peace disturb,
Heart-straining wail of Chopin's march !
Comrades marching with halting tramp,
Guard him in grief to the long bivouac !

Not for him was the sudden call
There with friends in the thund'rous fray ;
France gave him back to his motherland
To long for the Last Post's welcome note !

On the Same

TRAMP! Tramp! Tramp! slow and with rifles reversed
Up the dusty old road, fringed with the blossoms of May,
Passes the funeral troop, harvest of madness accurst,
Sad for the comrade now lost, hid from the light of the day—

Far from his own native land, over there in the meadows of France,
There he was mortally struck, midst the wild tempest of shell:
Clung, half-reluctant to life; did Fate still reserve him a chance?
Dazed, to the Motherland came—was it He or the sport of a spell?

Now his long struggle is o'er, once more as a soldier he goes,
Draped in his dear native flag, on his last march upon earth!
From this black sorrowful soil, Peace yet will burst forth like a rose,
Sweeter and lovelier still, for the shadows that darken its birth!

On Hearing the Distant Guns in Flanders

August, 1917, Woolwich

THE pulse of distant battle throbs
Discordant, on our straining ears,
And life of all its music robs ;
Arouses darkly haunting fears—

For those in yonder human wall,
Whose breasts, heroic, bear the shock,
Like vast Death Watch, at whose dread call
Eternity's grim gates unlock !

On a Beautiful Sunset during the War

ANOTHER day has sped, the glittering West,
Above the darkening purple of yon hill,
With streaks and spangles of effulgent gold
Scatters the parting glories of the Sun—

Majestic orb, on which all life depends ;
Round which our tiny world like plaything whirls,
Beneath whose awful gaze, eternal, calm,
Earth's microscopic atoms snarl and slay !

An Impression of the Arrival of a Convoy from France

At a Base Hospital

NOW through the dark and murky night
With throbbing sound and blinding light,
The lines of motors, dragon-eyed,
Into the Courtyard gently glide.

Beneath each hood, heart-straining sight,
Men broken in the latest fight
On ordered shelf recumbent lie,
Their feet, pathetic, greet the eye.

Behind those thick, France-muddied soles
The victims lie, in blanket rolls.
Some lightly touched, with joyful heart,
Some struck by Death's still hidden dart.

But one and all are weary, dazed,
As from a dream they wake, amazed,
Was this a nightmare that has passed?
Can this be Home? Aye, Home at last!

The lightning and the thunder's roar,
The angry sea on rocky shore,
With awful might oppress the mind
And mock the strength of human kind!

But these in scenes of horror dread,
With thund'rous death around, o'erhead,
Devoted in the storm remained
While many moons have waxed and waned!

Each one of these a mother's son,
Whose web of human silk was spun,
Now, driven on by War's fierce breath,
A mite in the Machine of Death!

The Coming Storm

February, 1917

AS on some sultry day a silence still,
Of threatened thunderstorm the presage calm,
Makes Nature fear to breathe, with palsied will,
Await its onset in expectant qualm—

The ripened harvests' smooth mosaics stand,
In health and beauty fair to view; so now
Our harvest rare in France's tortured land
Awaits Hell's tempests with unruffled brow!

And though, alas! the tempest will lay low
Too great a part of this our precious grain,
It will, though fallen, germinate and show
A golden light in glory's highest fane!

The Spirit of the Thames

In the crisis of the Great War, January, 1918

THE Genius of our land thou art,
Old Thames, whose pulse's mighty beats
Reflect the force of England's heart,
Long nourished by thy precious fleets.

Entwined through all our story long,
Thou saw'st succeeding ages pass,
The Kings and all the changing throng,
As shadows flit across thy glass—

So in this day of awful doubt,
When our old land is sore beset,
I stand, in pilgrimage devout,
On banks thine ancient waters fret;

And call upon thy spirit old,
For faith and guidance in this stress;
What fortune does the future hold,
Will victory our struggles bless?

Thy hidden spirit through me thrills,
With mystic chords my soul vibrates;
Our splendid past the vision fills,
That fought, triumphant, with the Fates!

Thy swelling bosom, loyal, true,
Before me, palpitating lies,
And, breathing faith and courage new,
Our England's upstart foes defies!

The Latest Crusade

General Allenby's capture of Jerusalem, November, 1917

WHAT wakened phantoms of the mighty dead,
With steps unheard, by mortal sight unseen,
March with the Christian host that once again,
In surging flood, sweeps through Jerusalem :—

The Norman knights with Godfrey at their head,
Saint Louis with the chivalry of France,
Our Cœur de Lion and Edward's brave array
(When jealous vied St. Denis-with St. George).

Alone the trait'rous Teuton spurns the cross,
Foul renegade, stands with the Saracen !
But Frank and Briton meet the cannon's crash,
With hearts as brave as in the clash of steel !

At this long last, the old Crusaders' heirs,
Brothers in arms, the Holy City win.
Their banners now, each race's emblem proud,
Wave o'er the soil, long hallowed by their blood !

The Last Letter

A LETTER from her hero came
Aglow with life and valour's flame,
That turned her fears to bliss !
And, as she read, they seemed to meet
Once more in love's communion sweet,
Wherein their spirits kiss !

So full of life, such perils past—
Alas ! that letter was the last
His hand will ever pen !
Before she read it, cold he lay,
His spirit flitted, gallant, gay,
Beyond all human ken !

Moonlight Aeroplane Raid

An Impression

Woolwich, October, 1917

THE moon is bright, the night is still,
All nature seems in smiling mood,
Content and peace our beings fill,
No threat of cloud nor tempest rude—

When hark! in that ethereal sky,
In that vast silvered space so bright,
A distant hum is heard on high,
And breaks, discordant, on the night!

And then, like watch-dogs, all around
The guns soon furiously bark;
The shells now moan or screaming sound!
What nightmare this, or madness stark?

We still must hear, with smothered rage,
The murd'rous music of the Hun;
But each one sterner does engage
Endurance till our goal is won!

The Dragon-fly

ACROSS the shining mirror of the pond
The lily's green and crimson leaves are spread,
Its bloom, like dazzling rubies, it has donned,
Its young leaf spears the mat like arrowhead—

While 'neath the sun all other plants downdroop,
Its glistening leaves reflect the burning rays :
Then comes the Dragon-fly with sudden swoop
Like mimic aeroplane its flight displays ;

Nose-dives and banks and circles round and round,
Downplanes at times as though it would alight ;
Its wondrous wings like crackling parchment sound,
With green and yellow rays it glitters bright ;

At last upon the point of young leaf's spear
It settles, with its rainbow wings outspread,
Its giant eyes malign and fierce appear :
Is this a pygmy of old dragons dread ?

How looks the world through those great opal eyes ?
Unchanged, maybe, since in reptilian time,
Long ages ere our mammal race did rise,
They gazed upon the forests of the prime !

Contemptuous they shun the human stains,
The marks of Man on Nature's smiling face,

And seek the waters still, where beauty reigns,
The cradles immemorial of the race!

You bask, unconscious of your pedigree,
Blue-blooded Dragon-fly of form bizarre,
A glimpse of older worlds you bring to me,
That teaches us how small and new we are!

Aug. 1, 1918.

(The Dragon-fly dates back to the Carboniferous period.)

On Man, Bees and Flowers

In part suggested by M. Maeterlinck's book "L'Intelligence des Fleurs"

FOR countless ages have the flowers,
Their cunning traps perfecting,
With honey bait, drawn to their bowers,
The insects unsuspecting—

The orchids, with a wondrous skill
Our calculations rival,
Delude the bees, and through them still,
Attain their race survival.

The social bees, with civic zeal,
Ideal laws attaining,
Work only for the common weal,
All selfish ends disdaining.

And as the flowers mock the bees,
And bees despise the flowers,
The upstart, Man, with like disease,
Thinks both beneath his powers!

Once he an uncouth being stood,
His hands from walking freeing,
And prowled about the cave and wood,
While, near his lonely being

A thousand hidden dangers lay,
His furtive steps surrounding ;
No Master he ! in that far day,
With stronger foes abounding !

But, with his flinten arrow-head,
The lesser game he hunted,
And, gnawing bones and nuts for bread,
His hard incisors blunted !

What mighty day was that, when he
The use of fire discovered,
And cooked his food, and modestly,
With skins, his body covered !

Then quickly up the scale he goes
And reached his dizzy station,
With dog attached, who with him rose,
Adored, and shared his ration.

And now, to show the point of these
Disjointed dissertations,
Look back upon the plants and bees,
In amorous relations.

For long ere Man, with swelling brain,
Commenced his great ascensions,
The plants industriously obtain,
And note the bees' dimensions !

But He, with " nouveau riche's " airs,
All " lower " forms despising,
And mind unseeing, at them stares,
And finds their ways surprising !

While now appears the human soul,
No lone spark scintillating,
But part of Universe's whole
Mind, through the spheres vibrating.

Birds and Music

THE Greeks, with simple blindness, thought
That music was to mortals taught
By Gods invented for us ;
While, all around them they might hear
The sounds melodious and clear
Of singing birds in chorus !

On that far day when savage man,
At sound of song birds, first began
To feel a strange elation ;
He stood, unwitting, at the birth
Of human melody on earth,
Felt music's first vibration !

Soon, doubtless he to whistle tried,
Made sorry sounds with mickle pride,
The feathered songsters aping ;
And on, through reeds and strings he went,
Did instruments and rules invent,
His laboured music shaping !

And birds, of flying reptile kin,
From harshest voice such sounds to win,
Had *they* some bird Apollo ?
Their wondrous organ they evolved
And sound's sweet mysteries had solved,
And wondering man did follow !

As Gods of music let us hail
The skylark, thrush and nightingale
And all the birds sweet singing ;
Whose notes, before Man's dizzy mind
Imagined Gods, of human kind,
For ages had been ringing !

At a Flower-Lover's Grave

(J. I. R.)

HERE spread the crimson thyme and shining leaf
Of gentian, that his heart did once rejoice,—
Dwarf junipers that bow their heads for grief
And sigh to us of that long-silent voice :—

As Spring awakens Nature from her sleep,
Grape hyacinths and snowdrops, blue and white,
His flower love in bright remembrance keep,
Glad emblems of the day that conquers night !

The loving hand that tended them is still,
And o'er his breast in beauty now they live,
The kindred soul with sweet emotion thrill
And some rare fragrance of his memory give !

To the High Mountain Plants, Survivors of the Ice Age

IN two short months of light and air,
Before the feathered snowflake cloud
Smothers again your beauties fair,
Beneath its white hypnotic shroud ;

In this short span of circling sap,
What visions rise within your soul,
To glacial Epoch leap the gap,
With Alpine kin, from Pole to Pole ?

You see again the reindeer pass
And fear the giant mammoth's tread ;
See Ages dim in instinct's glass,
Long struggles 'gainst extinction dread !

Shy glances of your gleaming eyes
Some insect panders here allure,
Win Nature's one eternal prize,
Your race continuance ensure !

Mountain Children's Superstitions

THE wind is soughing through the pines,
Like lost souls sighing,
And shadow shapes, with eerie whines
Around are flying.

The mountain children, in dark nights,
Ghostly things seeing,
Old knowledge keep of forest sprites
Deep in their being :

Where elves and goblins evil lurk ;
And fairy dances
In glades between the thorn and birk
In the moon's glances.

The weary winter's load of snow,
Round the cot heaping,
Sets legends old, by fireside glow,
Through their veins creeping !

The winter wind with mournful moan,
Through the firs sighing,
And shadow shapes around the lone
Children are flying.

Past Days

THE oak trees in autumn
Their russet leaves shed,
Alone or in showers
They float to earth's bed;

Their form and their hue
Awhile they retain,
Ere melting together
To dark earth again—

So our days that are gone
Scarce noticed did pass,
A short while distinguished
In memory's glass;

Unmarked and together
Dissolved they all lie;
But a part of Ourself
With each one did die!

To our Mother

IN childhood's world the sun was always shining,
The countless butterflies seemed brighter there;
The passing clouds all had a silver lining,
And pleasures new seemed springing everywhere—

With birds and flowers all around us dancing,
Our world was bright and free from carking care;
The garden seemed a fairy-land entrancing,
Our feathered feet could almost climb the air!

And should there come some little storm or sorrow,
Thy face belov'd could charm it soon away;
Beneath thy wing, we knew no doubtful morrow;
Thy love's protecting wall around us lay!

May'st thou, our Mother, long for us be living,
Without thy smile there is no perfect joy,
In grief and sickness, with thy great love giving
That childhood's faith which nothing can destroy!

Golf Mad

THROUGH England and Scotland I've roamed and
I've played
On all the great links by the sea ;
I've watched the great artists like Taylor and Braid,
But I fear there is no hope for me !

I've swung and I've posed vis-à-vis with the Pro.,
I've struggled till almost insane—
New errors creep in, but the old ones don't go,
And the causes each Pro. can explain.

Some tinker with stances, some swear at the swing,
Some trifle with shoulder or hip ;
Some seem to despair of my tip-toe-back-spring,
While others keep shifting my grip !

I've wiggled and waggled for years, but, alas !
I smother and slice as of yore—
It may be my fault, and I may be an ass—
But a Pro. I'll consult nevermore !

I study the pictures and practise each day,
Tho' prospects are not very bright—
And sometimes I try, after poisonous play,
To discover my faults in the night !

BOSTON MEDICAL
SEP - 6 1919
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Lament of an Old Buffer

LET them talk of their tubes and their taxis,
Tea palaces, cinemas grand,
And places where Beauty's galaxies
Are nowadays famed through the land!
But give back the long vanished faces
And scenes of the earlier days,
Our eyes that of dullness show traces,
Will sparkle once more in their rays—

The Taxi is smoother and faster,
The restaurants tinselled with show,
The bands, conversation may master,
The girls are, they tell me, not slow!
But give back a fast-trotting hansom,
Its bells and the hoofs on the road,
When you felt you were worth a King's ransom,
Tumultuous joy in you glowed!

Why then do the old things seem sweeter,
(Like scent of the hay in warm eve,)
And memories seem so much meeter
Of times that we cannot retrieve?
It cannot be gout or bad temper,
Or (stifle the horrible thought!)
That Time, which we know fugit semper,
Has old age, to visit us, brought!

To a Friend

On his leaving the Neighbourhood

NO more, alas! will envious chimes
Proclaim for us the night's advance,
Break images of olden times,
In our old England or in France—

Of Benvenuto and his ways,
As sparkling as new opened "Schweppes,"
Of Froissart, Commines and the days
And nights of our own gossip Pepys!

And jar on talks of coins and wars,
And ships and climes, both East and West;
Of poets, painters, give us pause,
And tell unwilling tongues to rest—

No more, to "Faust" or "La Bohème,"
We'll watch the smoke rings eddying fly,
From mild Virginian, or flame
Unto the fragrant weed apply—

May Fate decree that we shall meet
Not rarely, or in town or Alps,
Before Podagra chains our feet
Or Alopecia bares our scalps!

To the Robin

As known to the Garden Lover

WHEN all the trees their leaves have shed
You come with breast of softest red,
And as with silent toil I dig,
You join me, like a merry grig.

And smile at me as stupid lout
Who turns for you the soil about,
And skip around with fairy feet,
Then sing your notes so piercing sweet ;

And watch me with your twinkling eyes,
Then sudden dart on welcome prize,
Anon to perch on resting fork ;
At times methinks, you almost talk !

And yet a lion's heart you hide,
Beneath that debonair outside ;
All rivals chase with fiery zest,
And drive intruders from your nest.

Then welcome, little russet friend,
To light my labour pray attend ;
However dark the winter day
You brighten it with cheerful ray !

The White Squall

Near Mozambique, 1899

LO! the wild chargers,
Yoked to the stormwind,
Gallop across the
Ocean's blue pavement;

Million hoof-beats
Ceaselessly trampling,
Fling up the spray clouds
To the dark Heaven;

Fog of their nostrils
With the spray blending,
Curtains the sun with
Darkness foreboding!

Now they are o'er us
Hark! to their breathing:
Manes madly flying;
Might of the stormwind!

Ah! they have passed us,
Shattered the blueness;
Leaving a trail of
Grey heaving sadness!

To the Sphynx

OLD Guardian of the Nile, that into space
Hast gazed for ages long with air divine,
In thy majestic pose and mystic face
Suggesting some enigma deep and fine:
Thou, lion of the Pyramids, the line
Of ancient Pharaohs saw'st, as race on race
Around thee to forgotten gods incline,
And fruitlessly the fleeing secrets chase!
Of thy stupendous watch, couldst thou but show
The pageant of the peoples as they passed,
Who, silent, in the hidden world below
Await their souls, in mummied pathos vast!
Impart thy serpent lore that we may know
The secret of the Universe at last!

Another to the Sphynx

WHAT art thou, ancient watchman of the Nile,
That through millenniums hast silent gazed,
The passing Empires aweing, and amazed
Both Cæsar and Cambyses with the smile,
That seems with subtle mocking to beguile ;
What mystic monster have thy builders raised,
To stand through ages marvellously praised,
With agèd Pyramid's gigantic pile ?
Thou great Man-lion, from thine essence old
Eternal wisdom whispers round thine eyes,
No words can shape the thoughts of thee, untold,
That in the minds of generations rise :
No human hands could such a marvel mould,
Some demigod hath brought thee from the skies !

On a Gold Franc à Cheval of King John of France

Struck to pay his ransom to England

AS this gold Franc, with pleasure rare I hold,
This silent remnant of another land,
By skill of medieval craftsman planned,
" Johannes Rex " inscribed in letters old :
See, galloping across its field of gold,
The casquèd King with sword in knightly hand,
The lilies scattered o'er their trappings grand,
What pictures of the past to me unfold :
Of Poictiers and famous Crécy's field,
Black Prince and Chandos clad in armour bright,
With knights who live for real or mimic fight,
And " Jean le bon " himself as captive yield,
Then with these golden francs his ransom write !
Vain mockeries, but from their minds concealed !

On a Testoon of Francis I of France

GREAT Valois, with this image as a charm,
In spirit will I leap back to thy day;
Not judge thy picture, sensual and gay,
By standard modern, with its sober calm!
As King of Hearts then, see thee bear the palm,
And rule the Courts, in undisputed sway,
Striving with Charles in never-ending fray,
And carry 'cross the Alps thy puissant arm;
Again uprising after Pavia's blow,
The reawakened arts and letters grace,
Call Titian and Cellini to thy side,
And, as the joyous days so swiftly race,
With every pleasure fill thy Fontainebleau,
And live as type of heaven-anointed pride!

On a Snowstorm near the Top of "Lo Besso," above Zinal

BY lantern light we wend our weary way,
Through pine woods dark we feel a double night ;
Cross meadows and moraines in welcome light,
And climb the Peak in blaze of cloudless day—
The heaven-mixt air lends lightness to our clay,
Our beings mingle in this vastness bright,
Around, below, such beauties fill our sight,
Such orchestras of vibrant colours play—
With fleeting joys, well feasted, we descend,
And suddenly dark clouds around us see,
The snowflakes whirl about with demon's glee,
Numb feet and hands on hidden rocks depend !
Alas ! life's zest lies in uncertainty,
Each hour and day uncertain to the end !

To Leonardo Da Vinci

OH! wondrous star, in constellation bright
That shed its rays in that awakening time
Of Renaissance, and lighted works sublime,
That still diffuse an undiminished light;
Da Vinci, who, as if in wanton spite,
Thy talents wasting with unkindly crime,
And having shown thou couldst to Heaven climb,
In moody discontent, withheld'st thy might.
Such slender remnants that thou deign'dst to leave,
Amidst the dross, still shine as purest gold,
And sadly we the "might have been" conceive,
Hadst thou but been as men of mortal mould;
Of mightiest intellect we still must grieve
Such glories lost, or as a tale half-told!

To Charles Darwin

GREAT intellect, your sober age amazing,
That could not see, with undeveloped sight
Bred in the depth of ignorance's night
The splendid torch of knowledge you set blazing!
As steadfastly, with skill consummate raising
Your mind's great monuments, you toiled with might,
Unheeding all the darts of petty spite,
With eyes on Nature's deepest secrets gazing!
Your lonely way through trackless desert guiding
The light of knowledge lured you from on high,
Dispersed the mists that were the secrets hiding,
Enchanted caves illumined to your eye,
And lit your name as shining star abiding
Great minds amongst, whose fame can never die!

On the Death of an Old Friend

THIS is the dreaded and abhorrèd thing
That clears, unpitying, the stage of life,
And silently, or after mortal strife,
The King and beggar shrouds with lethal wing!
Upon this planet great uncrownèd King,
That blindly wieldest thine unseeing knife,
And, in a world with all injustice rife,
Oblivion's cloak on joy or pain dost fling!
It has been said that this is sib to sleep:
Then do but look upon these features dear,
And see what change has been effected here,
Some secret essence drawn from sources deep!
Where is that vital wit and knowledge clear?
Ah! Come away, lest I unmanly, weep.

To Man

In the Great War

WHAT demon hath possest the mind of man,
That gifts divine are heaped on him in vain,
While he for ever turns his dizzy brain
To mar all harmony in Nature's plan ?
And while of Earthly life he leads the van,
Upon this earth where life is child of pain,
His name must ever bear dishonour's stain,
While lust and murder fill his fleeting span !
Around the Sun his puny planet flies,
The Sun a mite in Heaven's myriad brood,
Yet he, ephemeral atom, vainly vies
With forces elemental, carries rude
Destruction o'er the land, the seas and skies,
And dominates the Earth with murderous mood !

To our Citizen Soldier

NO hero, of the gay romantic kind,
Pursuing death with callous smiling face,
All dangers seeking, in his giddy race,
To mortal doubt and hesitation blind :
But just a man, with simple human mind
Where home and kindred hold the chiefest place,
Whose days in toil and pleasures passed apace,
Till duty called and he lagged not behind !
The voice of honour and of country dear
He heard, and hearing stood forth in its need,
To give his life, his all, with courage clear,
That Liberty from loathsome bonds be freed.
Hail to the men who triumphed over fear,
Our England owes them now her noblest meed !

To William Watson

THE times are dark, disconsolate and sad;
The kindly Earth through Heaven's spaces wheels,
The Sun, impassive, lights the welter mad
In which the human race insanely reels:
A poet's song we crave, from one who feels
That noble purpose lies in this dark night,
And sullen smoke of War perchance conceals
Some jewelled message of a future bright!
One voice alone is left, that with the might
Of our great lords of song can nobly sing
In stately measures, fashioned in the light
Seen only by the eyes of Poet King!
Then sing again to thy too silent lyre
And, singing, swell our land's immortal choir!

To Germany, 1918

WITH dripping beak, the German eagle stands,
Its talons fiercely planted in its prey,
And in the lurid light of stormy day,
With cruel eye o'erlooks the conquered lands,
With victims quaking, 'neath its fell commands,
Primeval, savage, " Perish or obey " ;
Ruin and murder mark its ravening way
And infamy its vulture features brands !
For, worse than brute, it sought and searches still,
Not by abuse alone of naked might,
With lying fraud and treachery to kill
All that is worth in life ; with noisome blight,
To stamp on hapless world its devil's will,
And hurl us back to its barbaric night !

Quo Vadis?

WHAT is the end of a life full of toiling,
Struggles and sorrow have surely a goal,
Tell us if knowledge, the vintage of ages,
Dies with the body or lives with the soul?

History, poetry, wonders of science,
Images marvellous teem in the brain:
Darkened by death in a darkness eternal
Has all this harvest been garnered in vain?

Just for a bed in the shade of the churchyard
With the old ceiling of turf overhead;
Whirled through the ages as dust of a planet,
Dying itself, a vast icehouse of dead!

Ah! yet our eyes see but part of the spectrum,
Forces titanic, mysterious rays
Whisper a secret, still dark and unfathomed,
Hidden from feeble humanity's gaze;

Rays from the Mind of the Universe mighty,
For a brief moment our being has caught;
Soon reabsorbed in God's infinite treasure,
Radiant ions eternal of Thought!

To the Cuckoo

FROM birth a murderer at heart,
Cuckoo!
With demon's skill you play your part,
Cuckoo!

Most crafty, callous parasite,
Cuckoo!
Your victims' toil you ill requite,
Cuckoo!

But still we welcome every spring,
Cuckoo!
For you the leaves and flowers bring,
Cuckoo!

To V.B.—In Memory of many Arguments

FRIEND V.B., though we argue oft
And whiles forget the answer soft
That turns the spear of rage !
Sit glowering with glaring eye,
And hardly heed the passer by,
Like two cats on rampage !

The restless present let us fly,
'Tis but the foam and scum thrown high,
From ocean of the Past !
By wood and stream we'll roam along
Where every step recalls a song
And hours fade too fast !

And if this bores us (as it will !)
In some old inn we'll take our fill
Of food, perchance of drink !
And as Falernian we take,
Or honest beer, our thirst to slake,
Harmoniously *think !*

On Colour

COLOUR paints life's bounding walls
And its rich mosaic floor,
On our gladdened senses calls
With its everchanging store ;

Sweetest flowers' pleasing hue,
Budding wood's soft *Violet*,
Cloud-shades in an Ocean view,
Mountains when the sun does set ;

Blue of vasty sea and sky,
Fairest colour of them all,
Beauty of the human eye,
Larkspurs, Gentians that enthrall ;

Green of wood and lawn and fields,
Dress of our old Mother Earth ;
Soft reposeful pleasure yields ;
Carpet since the human birth ;

Yellow seem the stars and sun,
Lamp and candle's gentle light ;
Flowers that the shadows shun,
Colour gay, vibrating bright ;

Red the martial colour rare,
Badge of blood and flaming fire ;
Livery of health so fair,
Poppies, Tulips gay attire ;

Death and sleep and moonless night
Blindly greet the solemn *Black ;*
Absence of the joyous light,
Reigning where all colours lack !

All the colours coalesce
And proclaim the shining *White ;*
Pure as snow and bridal dress,
Conqueror of gloomy night !

The Old Yew Tree

OLD Yew tree, o'er the Churchyard green
Thine ancient boughs are spread;
Thy shadow falls on silent scene,
Old Guardian of the dead!

On happy christening group it fell:
Unmarked its omen now!
Again, to sound of wedding bell,
It touched health's joyous brow;

Then, on the journey last of life,
Thy greeting arms below,
Released from pain and nature's strife,
To destined earth they go!

The headstones white and green or grey,
As mushrooms round thee lie,
A moment mark man's fleeting day,
Against oblivion cry!

Old Yew tree, in the Churchyard green
Thou reign'st in solemn state;
Thy silent subjects sleep unseen,
And, through the ages, wait!

Marlborough

Thirty Years After

THE red-roofed town displays no outward change,
The sloping High Street sleeps its drowsy day,
And faces pass, familiar yet strange,
Without the glint of recognition gay!

And like a ghost the hallowed spots I pass
And people them with phantoms of the past;
As recollection lights my memory's glass
The long-forgotten scenes I see recast—

By Court and Field I slow retread the road,
Where every step recalls the vanished days,
When health and hope in youthful being glowed:
A half-remembered dream around me plays!

There Savernake's old beeches crown the crest,
Whose green or russet filled our eyes with joy;
The outposts of the forest, where the quest
Of bird and squirrel lures the heart of boy!

Then, Marlborough, I greet thee once again,
Thy body changes but the spirit lives;
And, midst the turmoils of the life of men,
Thy name a sudden joy our senses gives!

WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD., PRINTERS, PLYMOUTH, ENGLAND

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